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THE RISE OF THE NATIONAL BOARD OF HEALTH.

The acquisition by the United States of vast tropical territories has brought into prominence as a national problem the question of sanitary administration. It is generally admitted that the control of the tropics by the white man has thus far been a source of expense rather than of profit. Until the white man's science has eradicated from these regions the causes of malarial infection this will continue to be the case. The losses that may result from this source have often been experienced by this country. To mention only the most serious epidemic, in 1878 yellow fever was introduced from Cuba, and cost the South, first and last, some two hundred millions of dollars, or a sum equal, on a fair estimate, to the profits from our Cuban trade for a whole century.

Medical science has already found the causes of some of these dread scourges, and it is safe to affirm that the causes of all are discoverable. If discoverable, they may be held in check, if not entirely eradicated. Thus we may look forward to a time when yellow fever will be as rare in Havana as is small-pox in Philadelphia to-day. But to bring this about concerted and persistent effort will be necessary. That both the executive and legislative departments of the government appreciate the importance of prompt action is shown by recent events.

In two of his messages to Congress Mr. McKinley has advocated the creation of a sanitary commission. As yet Congress has not acted on his suggestion, but it has under consideration, as this article goes to press, a bill re-establishing the National Board of Health. Pending definite action on this bill, the commerce of the United States, which goes to all parts of the world, is controlled by no law which

guarantees that due regard will be paid to sanitary considerations in the conduct of that commerce. Our country, with its pest-infected tropical dependencies, has no regular agents for studying and combating such pests.

This is, on the face of it, an anomalous state of affairs. With the finest laboratories in the world, with scientists the peers of any, with government surgeons and physicians who are quoted the world over as authorities on germ diseases, there is absolutely no one whose business it is to look out for national health interests or to collect and publish national health statistics. In a word, we have at present no national sanitation. For nearly a century after the adoption of the Constitution national sanitary legislation was limited to provisions for the health of those who were placed by the Constitution under the special protection of the general government. For example, Congress passed regulations affecting soldiers, sailors, government agents, Indians and residents in the District of Columbia. On the other hand, wherever property or citizenship rights were protected by state law, Congress left protection of health to state authority. In the following pages the various attempts to establish a National Board of Health prior to 1879 are described and the powers given to the board established in that year are enumerated.*

The first effort in Congress, looking toward general national sanitary legislation, was made in 1796, when, on April 28, Mr. S. Smith, a representative from Maryland, proposed a resolution authorizing the President to name the place and manner in which incoming and outgoing vessels should perform quarantine.† This resolution was referred to a special committee. The next reference to it is on May 7.‡ “A bill to regulate compensation

* A second paper will describe the work of the National Board of Health, explain the reasons for its discontinuance, and discuss the question of the re-establishment of such a board at the present time.

† *Annals of Congress*, 1796, p. 1227.

‡ *Ibid.*, p. 1329.

to clerks and a bill to regulate quarantine were twice read and referred to Committee of the Whole." Four days later the bill, consisting of two sections, was debated by the House in Committee.* The first section authorized the President "to direct at what place or station in the vicinity of the respective ports of entry and for what duration and particular periods of time" quarantine was to be performed. The second section instructed collectors and other government agents at various ports to aid in the enforcement of state quarantine and health regulations. The debate upon the bill lasted two days. Seventeen Congressmen from ten states took part, several of them speaking two or more times and at considerable length. The first clause, which gave the National Executive power to locate all quarantine stations, was struck out by a House vote of 46 to 23.† On May 3 the bill went to the Senate,‡ was referred to a committee of three and reported May 24 with an amending phrase. Government officials were to aid in the enforcement of state quarantine and health laws "until general regulations relative to quarantine are made by law." Without discussion, so far as the annals show, this amendment was rejected, and on May 25 the original second clause was passed§ and became law.||

The lines on which the bill was debated can best be indicated by extracting from the debate itself. This was on the motion of Representative Heister, of Pennsylvania, to strike out the first section.¶ The strong speeches against the principle of the first section came from Pennsylvania,** which contributed four speakers, New York†† and Massachusetts.‡‡ The two strongest advocates of the principle of

* *Annals of Congress*, 1796, p. 1347-1360.

† *Ibid.*, p. 1359.

‡ *Ibid.*, p. 87.

§ *Ibid.*, p. 105.

|| *United States Statutes at Large*, i, ch. xxxi, p. 474.

¶ *Ibid.*, p. 1347.

** Gallatin, Swanwick, Kittera, Heister.

†† Williams.

‡‡ Lyman.

that section were from Maryland* and South Carolina.* Strange to note, the principal argument against the practicability of the first clause came from North Carolina and Georgia. Having no quarantine, Rhode Island† and Connecticut‡ each had an ardent advocate of both the practicability and principle of national quarantine. It is only fair to Pennsylvania to state that Litgreaves took exception to every argument made by his colleagues, and went so far as to doubt "whether upon this subject the states had any jurisdiction at all, and whether all such power is not vested by the Constitution in the Congress under their general authority to regulate commerce and navigation."§

The arguments in favor of Mr. Heister's motion ran as follows: "At the time of the Constitution, the states were considered as possessing the power of regulating quarantine." "Each individual state has a right to legislate on this subject for itself." "It is a state affair." "Individual states have sole control." "If (any) states have no (quarantine) regulations . . . it is because they have not felt the want of them." "Each state understands its own concerns better than the general government." The bill is not only "unnecessary and improper, but it is an injudicious interference with the internal police of the states." "It is an attempt to extend the power of the Executive unnecessarily." "It is by no means a commercial regulation." "Quarantine has nothing to do with commerce." "If commerce is incidentally affected . . . by regulations for the preservation of health . . . it ought to be." The states can enforce, for . . . "New York and Pennsylvania have never had any trouble." "The master of the vessel who refused to stop at (quarantine) agreeably to the orders of state government (s) might be prosecuted at Common Law."|| Two southern members add,

* Smith.

† Bourne, p. 1350, 1357.

‡ Hillhouse, p. 1352.

§ P. 1350.

|| Page, of Virginia, p. 1357.

"Georgia is too far for the general government to act."
"The great extent of country makes impracticable a common law."

To these arguments the Southern opponents of the motion responded: "Epidemic diseases imported, affect the United States at large. *They do not merely affect the city where first imported, but they obstruct the commerce of all others; they not only embarrass the commerce but injure the revenues of the United States.*"* "This (question) is essentially connected with the powers of Congress in an important subject (*i. e.*, the regulation of commerce)." "States have or may have their own health laws, but the performing of quarantine is in the direction of the general government; it is a commercial regulation." "There is no authority in the state government to regulate quarantine." "The individual states . . . want the power to carry (quarantine regulations) into execution." "If (states) have stopped ships with disease on board, they had no legal right to do so." Two northern members strengthen the argument thus:† "It is a commercial regulation, to which by the Constitution Congress alone is competent." "Gentlemen might as well say that individual states have the power of prohibiting commerce as of regulating quarantine. *If they have power to stop a vessel one month they might stop it for twelve months.*" "They might interfere with regulations respecting our trade and break our treaties."

The issue was fairly drawn. Mr. Hillhouse, of Connecticut, offered two amendments. (1) "That the President make quarantine regulations *where states have none.* (2) That officers assist to enforce state laws until Congress *shall make regulations to the contrary.*"‡ These amendments were rejected. The first because it seemed highly improbable that a state should not have some sort of law if any were

* Smith, of South Carolina. The italics are the author's throughout.

† Bourne, of Rhode Island, and Hillhouse, of Connecticut.

‡ P. 1352.

needed. The second because it was useless. Future Congresses, like the present, would of course refuse to give to the central government what the Constitution and the physical limitations of distance and time imposed upon the states. The first section of the original bill was voted down as wrong in principle and impracticable, the second section was adopted as sufficient. The Senate likewise refused to admit the possibility of future interference by Congress and voted the second clause only.

In 1799, Congress passed an act prescribing just how government agents should conduct themselves when aiding in the execution of state quarantine and health laws. The bill was introduced by the same gentleman, who had three years before presented a bill for national quarantine, and who evidently regarded the matter as settled in favor of non-interference on the part of the national government. He makes no comment and the bill is passed without discussion.*

Early in 1800 the whole question is reopened. The circumstances are significant. Congress receives two memorials asking for a general quarantine law. The first is from the health office in Philadelphia, and the second from the select and common councils of that city.† The first reads: "In consequence of plague having raged in Morocco, Great Britain has enacted very strict quarantine laws, but, although the port of Philadelphia might be watched by all the vigilance in the power of the health office, there is *no general law* to keep that most dreadful scourge of the human race from being introduced into *some* ports of the United States." The second memorial sent from the councils—two bodies with which the citizens of Philadelphia were in closest communication—prayed that "Congress may take such precautionary measures to prevent the introduction of the plague . . . as to their wisdom shall seem fit."

**United States Statutes at Large*, iii, p. 619. February 25, 1799. This act repealed the act of 1796.

† *Annals*, 1789-1800, pp. 578, 633.

These memorials were read to Congress and referred to the Committee on Commerce and Manufactures. A month later a letter from the Secretary of the Treasury was laid on the table, which presented estimates for an appropriation to carry into effect prospective national quarantine and health laws. The whole matter died in committee.

Again, two years later, New York citizens petitioned Congress and complained of the quarantine laws of that state.* This petition went to the committee which had for two months been considering whether any and what alterations were necessary to be made in the 'Act respecting Quarantine and Health Laws.'† This committee never reported further than to recommend a bill for the port of Alexandria, Va. Congress took no action upon this bill and never called for the report of the committee, and the question of quarantine was not again considered by Congress until 1832.

Of no little significance is it that within six years from the initial defeat of national quarantine both Philadelphia and New York should have requested Congress to reverse the decision of 1796. Had it not been for the opposition of these two cities in 1796, with their presumed efficient quarantine, Congress would undoubtedly have assumed responsibility for general and uniform quarantine regulations from Maine to the Gulf. "It makes a difference whose ox is gored!" In 1796, New York had a quarantine station. Quarantine was then "merely a police regulation" and not subject to Congressional legislation. In 1802, this "police regulation" had become an obstruction to New York commerce. Quarantine was then claimed to be a commercial regulation—a national question. In Philadelphia in 1796 considerable money had been expended upon a quarantine station. There were local reasons for interpreting quarantine regulations to be "mere internal police regulations."

* *Annals*, Seventh Congress, First Session, p. 991.

† *Ibid.*, p. 415.

Four years later, when commerce in the city had grown, it was plain to the Philadelphia Health Office that plagues spread in defiance of state and local boundaries. The councils evidently were ready to sacrifice their own health office and its independence, in order to have "quarantine regulations" interpreted as "regulations of commerce." Both New York and Philadelphia repudiated the philosophy of their former representatives but, unfortunately for them, the harm had been done. Congress had now a precedent to worship. Memorials and petitions for national quarantine could not compete with questions of tariff, bank and the impressment of seamen.

Again, in January, 1831, the Philadelphia Board of Health memorialized Congress and petitioned for a national inquiry into the nature of cholera and the means of preventing its introduction into this country. For a third time, in 1832, Pennsylvania acknowledged her inability by her own laws to protect herself from epidemic invasion. The Committee of Commerce reported a bill to enforce quarantine regulations and cited the difficulty presented if a boat chose to anchor in the middle of the Delaware River. Neither New Jersey nor Pennsylvania could enforce inspection laws. "It is therefore necessary that the authority of the general government should supervene *to supply the deficiency and thus guard the health of the country.*"* Without opposition this bill was ordered to a third reading. Three months later it returned to the house. A Boston man made the sole opposition.† He did not believe in quarantine. It was a farce at Boston. He did not believe yellow fever, cholera, etc., were contagious anyway. The Lower House did believe these diseases were contagious, did believe that quarantine was an effective way of preventing their spread and considered Boston's poor quarantine methods a splendid and convincing argument for a strong national law. No one was heard objecting on

* *Congressional Debates*, viii, part ii, p. 2445.

† *Ibid.*, p. 3857-58.

grounds of constitutionality or impracticability. The bill went to the Senate where it died without a hearing. Such giants as Webster, Clay and Calhoun had no time for a consideration of physical germs, it was theoretical epidemics they wished to quarantine.

Chief Justice Marshall is often quoted against national quarantine regulations. In 1824, in the case of *Gibbons vs. Ogden*, he does make the statement that "quarantine laws are component parts of . . . the immense mass of legislation . . . not surrendered to the general government." But he says on the same page:* "If the legislative power of the Union can reach them it must be for national purposes." . . . "By making the provisions in aid of the states' (quarantine laws) . . . the *opinion is unequivocally manifested*, that Congress *may control the state laws as far as it may be necessary to control them, for the regulation of commerce.*" According to Chief Justice Marshall then, the definition of "commercial regulation" was the only restriction upon national quarantine legislation.

In the turbulent days of Jackson and the later Kansas controversy, it is not at all surprising that such matters as quarantine should have been neglected. Nor is it surprising that upon its first reappearance it should be made to play a rôle in the great drama of the pre-secession days. In March, 1859, the Senate Committee on Commerce, with an Alabama man as chairman, reported a bill authorizing certain changes of government buildings at the New York quarantine station, together with a States' Rights amendment.† "Provided, that nothing herein contained shall be construed as authorizing the establishment of a quarantine station or stations, or the erection of warehouses for the reception of cargoes of vessels in quarantine, *without the consent of the state in which the said quarantine and warehouse may be established.*" On this committee were Clay,

*9 Wheaton, p. 206.

† *Globe*; Thirty-fifth Congress, Second Session, p. 1643.

of Alabama, Toombs, of Georgia, and Reid, of North Carolina. Pennsylvania, Maine and Michigan also had representation on the committee. The quarantine problem was not a serious one in Maine or in Michigan—the only party interested was Pennsylvania. Against this one interested state was the “solid South,” and we do not wonder that at such a time the Senate agreed to an amendment whose only value was to commit that body to a non-interference policy. The House did not consider the amendment and it remains as a mere relic of ante-bellum tactics.

In the Reconstruction period, different minor laws were passed without opposition, chiefly relating to old hulks which were ordered placed at the service of local quarantine authorities.* These did, however, by implication recognize the exclusive power of the state to legislate on quarantine. The Senate debated a motion providing for national quarantine regulations to prevent the introduction and spread of Asiatic cholera. In 1866 a joint resolution instructed the “Secretary of War to appoint under the direction of the Surgeon-General a commission to visit Constantinople to inquire into the best means to *prevent the spread of cholera.*” The Senate rejected this resolution, and re-enacted the instructions of 1796. It was thought sufficient to follow precedent especially when some members raised the constitutional question involved in national quarantine. One Senator opposed the measure because attempts to control cholera were “absolute folly,” . . . “shooting child’s arrows at the moon.” †

In 1869 ‡ a resolution was presented asking that the “Secretary of the Treasury be requested to examine and report as to the fitness of Morris Island, South Carolina, for a quarantine and hospital station, and as to the propriety of purchasing said island for such purposes; and that he be

* See Act December 13, 1864; March 24, 1866, Joint Resolution, Appendix, p. 428; February 28, 1867, Joint Resolution, Appendix, p. 246.

† Debates, pp. 2444, 2484, 2584.

‡ *Globe*, 1868-69, p. 415.

further requested to report in regard to the *feasibility and propriety of adopting a uniform system of quarantine laws applicable to foreign vessels and vessels of the United States, whether engaged in the foreign or coasting trades, and of placing superintendence of the execution of such laws exclusively under control of the Treasury Department.*"

In 1872 Congress frequently considered the question of uniform national protection against epidemics. January 24 the House instructed the Committee on Commerce* to investigate, . . . "whether our commerce with foreign nations and upon the coasts and waters of the United States and at any port thereof was subjected to any oppressive or illegal requirements or restraints, under color of quarantine (or) health laws." February 6, Roscoe Conkling expressed a desire on the part of New York interests to reopen the question of national responsibility for the obstruction to commerce attendant upon quarantine.† He asked for an investigation into methods at New York City and declared: "*One object of the information is to know how far Congress should take jurisdiction of these subjects.*"

In 1871, Clarke, of Texas, had introduced a joint resolution providing for a more effectual system of quarantine on the Gulf Coast. It was necessary for Mr. Clarke to present the resolution again in 1872.‡ This time the Committee on Commerce reported, and the resolution passed the House. The Senate was not satisfied with existing quarantine on the Atlantic Coast or anywhere else, so the bill as finally approved authorized an inspection of all port cities on the Atlantic Coast as well as on the Gulf of Mexico. Existing methods of quarantine were to be examined and improvements suggested which "will least interfere with the interests of commerce." The preamble stated the reasons for ordering a national investigation: "Whereas experience has

* *Globe*, 1871-72, p. 570.

† *Ibid.*, p. 842.

‡ *Globe*, 1870-71, p. 1438. *Globe*, 1871-72, p. 459.

proved that the present system of quarantine on the Sea and Gulf Coast is inefficient to prevent the ravages of yellow fever in the cities and towns of that section."*

Events proved that the country offered practically no opposition to the entrance of yellow fever. In 1878 occurred the most terrible epidemic of yellow fever which the country had known for nearly a century. This time the ravages of the disease were not confined to any particular section. Northern seaport cities had numerous cases, and inland as far north as Ohio the scourge raged. In a short time over 100,000 men were stricken, 20,000 died, and over \$200,000,000 were spent in checking the devastation. Not only did the non-infected North contribute directly its millions for the relief of the pest-ridden South, but indirectly it suffered still more because of obstructions to its commerce.

In the Senate† the epidemic was said to have been "so destructive to human life, and *the interests and prosperity of the whole country as to make it a subject of gravest public concern.*" To the subject the President first gave his attention in his annual message.‡ He mentions the fact that Congress would be asked to endorse the action of the government which furnished the stricken country with 1,800 tents and rations worth \$25,000. He adds: "The fearful spread of this pestilence has awakened a very general public sentiment in favor of national sanitary administration, which shall not only quarantine but have the sanitary supervision of internal commerce in times of epidemics and hold an advisory relation to the state and municipal health authorities, with power to deal with whatever endangers the public health and which the municipal and state authorities are unable to regulate."

Upon the convening of Congress resolutions were pre-

* *Globe*, Appendix, p. 822. See also pp. 4094, 4425.

† Preamble to Bill for Committee to Investigate Epidemic Diseases.

‡ Richardson's Messages, vii, p. 492. From mere habit the Act of 1799 had been re-enacted.

sented in each house authorizing the appointment of committees to "inquire into the history and means of prevention and arrest of yellow fever and cholera."* The committees were to employ clerks and experts and gather testimony from every possible source. Upon the suggestion of Senator Edmunds, the committees were also instructed to consider whether the right to legislate on epidemics was constitutional.†

The committees reported in February.‡ Twelve experts had been employed, eight from southern and four from northern states. These experts had visited various districts which had been infected and gathered an immense amount of information. They were of the opinion that yellow fever was not indigenous to any district of the South.§ It was recommended that there be absolute non-intercourse with foreign infected ports, and that Congress establish a well-regulated national quarantine. "Public health is second in importance to no question which addresses itself to the consideration of the legislator." The committee found the constitutional authority for legislation on epidemics in the general constitutional power to "regulate commerce with foreign nations and among the states."||

Both houses acted upon the report of the committees. March 3, 1879, a National Board of Health was created, and June 2, 1879, after a spirited debate in both houses,¶ the powers of the board were extended and clearly defined. The fourth section of the act instructed the board to consult with sanitarians throughout the country, "special attention being given to the subject of quarantine, *both maritime and inland*, and especially as to regulations which should be established between state or local systems of quarantine and

* December 2, 1878. Senate, p. 2. House, p. 64.

† Records, viii, p. 31.

‡ Senate Reports, ii, 734.

§ Of 88 epidemics of yellow fever, from 1683-1878, 77 are known positively to have been of foreign origin.

|| Article i, section 8.

¶ *Congressional Record*, pp. 1539-1552, 1634-1650.

a national quarantine system." National rules were to be imposed where local rules were not sufficient or lacked the means of execution. These national rules when made and approved by the President were to be promulgated by the National Board of Health and enforced by the state sanitary authorities. "If the state shall fail or refuse to enforce such rules, the President may detail an officer for that purpose."

The board consisted of eleven members appointed by the President with the approval of the Senate. Although men of international reputation they were to receive not more than \$10 a day and reasonable expenses, while acting for the board. Four departments of the government furnished four members who received no extra compensation *as members*. They were John S. Billings, Surgeon of the Army; Thomas J. Turner, Medical Director of the Navy; Preston H. Bailhache, of the Marine Hospital Service, and Solicitor-General Samuel F. Phillips, from the Department of Justice.* The other members of the board were: Professor Cabell, LL. D., of the University of Virginia, first president of the National Public Health Association; Professor Stephen Smith, of New York; Tullio S. Verdi, of Washington, D. C.; Samuel M. Bemis, M. D., Louisiana; Henry I. Bowditch, M. D., Massachusetts; Hosmer A. Johnson, M. D., Illinois; Robert W. Mitchell, M. D., Tennessee. The Executive Committee consisted of representatives from the army, navy and marine hospital service, and of Professors Cabell and Smith. The Finance Committee was made up of Dr. John S. Billings, Dr. Verdi, and Professor Smith. These facts will prove of importance when we come to consider the work laid out for the board and the reasons given for its discontinuance in 1882.

The board met and organized April 2, 1879. It has left on record its own interpretation of the functions assigned to it by the act of June 2, which is as follows:

* See National Board of Health Report, 1879.

“As at the period of the passage of this law there were only state and local systems of quarantine in existence in this country, it is proper to infer

“1. That Congress did not regard state and local systems of quarantine adequate to meet all the emergencies that had arisen or that might arise in the prevention of the introduction of contagious and infectious diseases into this country from foreign countries.

“2. That Congress contemplated the ultimate establishment of a national quarantine system, and that it intended that such regulations should be made between state and local systems of quarantine and the national quarantine system as would secure harmony of action and would give a complete and effective system of quarantine to the United States.”

“The national authority is required to secure

“(a) International sanitary co-operation.

“(b) The collection and distribution of sanitary information.

“(c) The preparation of maritime sanitary regulations.

“(d) The enforcement of maritime sanitary inspections in foreign ports.

“(e) The erection and maintenance of refuge stations.

“(f) The aid of state authorities.

“(g) The organization of quarantine where none exists.

“(h) The power to add necessary rules to any deficient quarantine.”*

What was the change in conditions which made this assumption of power by the national government seem reasonable and necessary?

It will be remembered that in the debate of 1796 but two limits were set to national legislation in health matters, that of *national* interest and that of *practicability*. So long as epidemics were sectional, Congress might justly refuse to interfere with state regulations. Again, no matter how

* Report 1882. Appendix I, p. 484 ff.

general the evil, Congress was not bound to act until it discovered some practicable means of combating that evil. In the days of stage coaches and sailing vessels, hand-loom and wooden ploughs, it was quite true that disease in Charleston was of little importance to Boston. It was probably true that a general law to govern New York and Savannah would have been impracticable. So long as the obstruction to national commerce was infinitesimal it was of no avail to prove that quarantine was a regulation of commerce. On the other hand, as soon as the commercial interests of any particular section, such as New York or Philadelphia, were unnecessarily obstructed by the presence or absence of these so-called police regulations, the representatives from that section were ready to accept a more liberal interpretation of *national* and *practicable*.

It was a mere question of definition, time and distance being the determining factors. By 1879 definition was much easier. Railroad and telegraph had annihilated space and time. New Orleans was then nearer to the White House than New York to Philadelphia in 1796. The South was no longer isolated—her commercial centres were in daily communication with Chicago, the far East and the far West. A case of yellow fever in Pensacola could send chills through the Mississippi valley. A case of cholera imported through the port of New York might produce an epidemic in Chicago within a fortnight. The epidemic of 1878 had proved the whole Mississippi basin to be a unit—every part suffering with every other part. By the act establishing a national board of health Congress recognized by overwhelming majorities in both houses, that industrial development had rendered *all sections of the country interdependent in matters of health as well as wealth*, and that isolation was no longer possible. As Representative McGowan, of Michigan, expressed it: "Such a plague as swept over a number of southern states last summer has a direct and immediate influence upon commerce. It paralyzes and destroys it.

It dries up the very foundations of trade. And to say that the power of Congress over commerce could not be exercised to save commerce itself would seem to be absurd.”* Or, as Senator Blaine believed, “in regulating quarantine, Congress would only be following a precedent, the constitutionality of which was no longer questioned. The national laws had since 1866 governed not only the importation of diseased cattle from abroad, but their transportation *between* and *within* the States. In the same way national laws prohibited the importation of adulterated drugs and medicine.†”

The country at large was in sympathy with this interpretation. For fifty years the system of internal improvements at national expense had been accustoming all sections to a liberal construction of the terms “commerce” and “general welfare,” as contained in the Constitution. Epidemics were introduced by *national* commerce. Laxity in the local control of these epidemics had frequently reacted disastrously on the commerce of the whole nation. Unreasonable detentions or inspections affected not merely the particular merchandise involved, but the various interests waiting for the delivery of that merchandise. If national supervision of quarantine would give a feeling of security to commerce, there would be a tremendous saving on every board of trade in the land. If \$100,000 expended upon a national board of health would diminish by *one day* the duration of an epidemic such as that of 1878, the *nation* would be repaid many times over.

Commercial interests were convinced that uniform quarantine under national supervision would put a stop to vexatious delays and panics. National quarantine was to mean obstruction to disease, not commerce, the killing of germs, not trade. Medical journals, sanitary authorities, and organizations such as the National Public Health Association

* *Congressional Record* for 1879, p. 1639.

† *Ibid.*, 1866, pp. 2162, 2163.

predicted that national control over quarantine and national investigations into the causes of epidemics would hasten the time when yellow fever and cholera would create as little alarm as diphtheria and small-pox. The National Board of Health began its work in June, 1879, spurred on by public confidence and expectation, and inspired by the belief that it would be the means of ushering in a new era when sanitary science would triumph over the diseases of the tropics.

WILLIAM H. ALLEN.

Philadelphia.